



Agenda Item #: 5

Project Title: 6303 Portage Road & 4821 Hoepker Road - Residential Building Complex. (District 17)

Legistar File ID #: 86617

Members Present: Shane Bernau, Chair; Jessica Klehr, Harry Graham, David McLean, and Rafeeq Asad

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of January 22, 2025, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a Residential Building Complex located at 6303 Portage Road and 4821 Hoepker Road.

Registered and speaking in support were Joann Rubio, and Nick Hester. Registered in support and available to answer questions Graham Bullmore, Zak Swafford, and Brian Randall.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission inquired about the parking ratios, which was confirmed at 1.75 spaces per unit, including garages and driveways.

The Commission inquired about site context and connectivity. The applicant noted that they are only purchasing a portion of the site. The context includes the American Center to the south, a church adjacent to the site where it connects to Portage Road, and single-family residential to the east and north, across Hoepker Road. The applicant noted that connectivity will include east/west and north/south public rights-of-way. The north/south road could extend, but the east/west may not.

The Commission inquired about their review purview. The Commission noted that better street perspectives would be needed with a formal submittal. The Commission discussed the proposed building types and materials, specifically referencing Page 62 of the submittal set, noting that the designs look dated and foreign. They are lacking any refinement in how the materials come together, the façades are flat, and they are lacking any front porches or overhangs. The Commission encouraged the applicant to look at Madison context, Madison Zoning Code, as well as the Madison climate.

The Commission referenced the Bayview Neighborhood, which combines outdoor spaces with housing very successfully.

The Commission noted that unprotected front doors are not typical found in our area and climate. It is difficult to understand how many different types of units are proposed; zeroing in on that would be good. The Commission inquired about whether LEED sustainable strategies would be incorporated into the development. The applicant noted that they do not seek LEED certification but do meet local energy code requirements.

The Commission noted that consideration should be given to how the different unit types are dispersed throughout the development from an equity standpoint. Thought should be given to placement and screening of the garage buildings.

The Commission noted appreciation for the variation in design, noting the design appears to be more southern in nature. The buildings are showing that there is not a lot of insulation as the fascia boards are exposed. Typically, those are nonexistent because it means there is not insulation, which is necessary in this climate. In addition, the slab on grade is out of place, we typically see basements. Sometimes we will see a buildings raised in those cases to provide some separation from grade.

The Commission noted that the shared garages make it difficult to identify what is a road and what is an alley. How those garages relate to the houses, either being in the forefront versus setback compromises the streetscape. The Commission noted that consideration should be given to the residential doorways and how they relate to the garages, giving consideration to the hierarchy of the building placements and what is oriented towards what. Details and landscaping will make them more palatable.

The Commission inquired about the topography and intermittent stream. The applicant noted that the WDNR confirmed that there is not an intermittent stream and that the topography will lead to exposed foundations/footers, which will be treated with materials and landscape, and some units will have steps. Roadways will be under 5%. The Commission inquired about whether the applicant considered working with the grading versus regrading the site. The applicant noted that they will be looking at that in the future.

The Commission noted that some of the facades and massings are foreign, in addition to some layouts. Not everything needs to be the same, but we need to look at the porches and strong orientation to the street, and a more grid-like pattern. Once structures are turned every which way, it becomes difficult to maintain a positive orientation both to the street and internally to other buildings. Taking a look at the layout of the site first will start to inform the massing and orientation of the buildings.

The Commission noted that the aspirations are right, however there are some structural deficiencies with the plan and overall layout. This plan has some good elements to it, but it is very inwardly focused and is missing natural features of the site and landscape. The plans include a preliminary grading plan that seems less extensive than one may have thought, but as we look at the west side of the property, there are areas where there are significant walls to make the development work. There is a real beauty to the land as it exists, you should work with the topography, the wooded areas, and natural features. Create more of an amenity and natural feature out of the stormwater pond. Create more meaningful greenspace connections. The parallel parking and true streetscapes are great, the pedestrian zone needs to have a terrace between the parking and the sidewalk. The terrace is critical, work those back into the streetscape.

The Commission noted a pretty strong planting palette in the landscape plan but pushed back on the winter creeper as it is invasive. The street trees are a positive. The Commission again referenced Bayview as an example; it is not just landscaping around the perimeter of a structure but embedding a community in the landscape. The landscape contributes to the quality of life, it is the identity of a place. For Wisconsin it is a lot of prairie landscape. A tree inventory would be great to see if there are any trees worth saving.

The Commission encouraged the applicant to relook at the structure of the plan before getting in too deep. Porches are so important. Looking at how the mowed path [around the stormwater pond] is integrated and connected to other paths, the units in the northwest corner are problematic and are causing the issue from a grade perspective.

Action

Since this was an **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION**, no formal action was taken by the Commission.